

Interview: Mervyn Van Steinberg (MV)

Interviewer: Ken Novakowski (KN)

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Transcription: Marie Decaire

KN [00:00:01] Hey, good morning, Merv. This is March the 9th, 2020 and we're interviewing Mervyn Van Steinberg, who for many, many years was the Labour Coordinator for the United Way and served in many other positions along the way, in the labour movement. Good morning.

KN [00:00:20] Good morning. So, Merv we'd like to start by getting you to tell us a bit about your early years, when and where you were born.

KN [00:00:30] Also, tell us a bit about your family, growing up in wherever you were born in this community and whether there was politics, unions, religion, what was your family like, and we just want to get some picture of your early life.

MV [00:00:44] Sure. I was born in the Kelowna General Hospital and lived in Kelowna, in Rutland, actually just outside of Kelowna, for 32 years until I moved to the Lower Mainland for the job with the United Way. And I got into that later on, but and was born on a farm and had four siblings and have four siblings. And my folks were always...well, I guess it would call it active, engaged in the community. They were always doing something. Trying to help somebody out or so, you know, that kind of stuff. They were involved with the United Church and so had a bit of a background there. They also had foster kids they... in fact, I guess in the years that they had foster kids, there was 62 of them had gone through. I remember them getting an award for that at the end. An awful lot of them were babies, which would stay just one or two days before they, because they'd either, you know, go back to the parent or be placed pretty quickly. But a large percentage of them were teenagers. And because we were on the farm, it was hard to place the teenagers because kids that had gone through those numbers of years, of all kinds of strife and problems and issues were always looking for an out, and a way to get away and do that stuff. So they they'd like to place it on the farm and there was something for them to do there, for that matter. And they weren't quick to kind of run away again and do that. So there was a lot of that. There was a few of them that kind of grew up around there, at least spent five or six or eight years. So there was a lot of that kind of activity as well as all of the work on the farm. And so and went to school there and that in that area and went on from there to, you know, to the rest of my life, that's where I came from, my background.

KN [00:02:53] Just in regard to your school, what kind of a student were you?

MV [00:02:59] Well, I wasn't going to university. So, and I think I knew that walking in the door and the school kind of knew that walking in the door and there was an awful lot of us. So in those days, the schools, you know, if you weren't headed towards university, you kind of were a third wheel. And they had things called... later on in high school, they had things called the vocational program or the occupational program. So you were kind of the ox. And they were, you know, a stab at trying to get you introduced to the trades and some of those types of things. And so I mean, I understood the part about reading and writing and arithmetic and saw that as, you know, somewhat valuable. But outside of that, I spent time getting my Cs & C-s that I needed to get through. And later on, actually in high

school, it became a great social network for me. So I was, I used a lot more to as a reason to get out of the house in the morning. And I did graduate, you know, but never, you know, come out of high school or out of school feeling like, wow, that was a great experience. And again, mostly it was, I think, because the system just was focused so hard on people going to university. And that was the education.

KN [00:04:24] What about your early work experiences?

MV [00:04:28] Well, my early work experience, naturally, growing up at a farm, you were working right from the time that you could operate. I mean, I remember kind of driving vehicles, tractors and stuff when you were even seven and eight years old. You know, but there was always lots of that. And because it was a farming community, we didn't have an orchard. We had some cows and did an awful lot of haying and did that kind of stuff. We're just a small little acreage that my parents owned themselves. But we leased a couple of hundred acres and hayed that as well. So there was a lot of that of that kind of work, for sure, that went on, but I was thinking about one of my first jobs was at a place in Westbank called Homeco Trailers. And Homeco Trailers, and why I was thinking about it for this, kind of coming for this interview... Homeco Trailers, they built mobile homes. And in those days, mobile homes were a fairly big thing. You know, it seemed to be people were buying them, anyways so they have this plant building these. Now, what I was thinking about at that job and how it impacted on me later on for sure. It was a production line. And so in the production line, you would, Homeco Trailers was putting out about two and a half trailers a day. And that was the kind of the rhythm that was going on. At one point, the company came to the workers and said, look, we we're really kind of in trouble. We have to meet some deadlines and we have to meet some obligations. We have to meet these kind of things. And we're really asking you if you think you can go to, you know, kind of three trailers a day. Well, it was very interesting. Everybody kind of just lunged into it and got at it. And so on. And in fact, through this three-month period that they were looking at the plant started to produce as many as four trailers a day. It was amazing what had happened. Right? And the thing I remember about it was that the employer come out after that was done, after that three-month period was kind of put in when they asked the workers to do that. And instead of saying, great job, you guys. And boy, that's wonderful. And now I know I have the ability for you guys to put your shoulder to the wheel and do that kind of stuff. They said to us, do you think you could do five? And what happened in that plant was it just died. The productivity in that plant died. They never got that plant back up to two and a half trailers a day again after that. And I mean, I thought about that lots afterwards, in terms of why the employers just seemed to get on the wrong page about this stuff instead of seeing the value they had, where the workforce could come in and really put their shoulder to the wheel and push every now and again for them when they needed to. They decided that they were going to whip 'em even harder and get more out and the productivity died. So that was one of the other work experiences that I had before I went into the electrical trade.

KN [00:07:20] So, tell us a little about the electrical trade.

MV [00:07:28] Well, the electrical trade...I got involved the electrical trade because a family friend was an electrician and he was a member of the IBEW 213 Electrical Workers Union, although that wasn't a big factor in the beginning. And he was wanting me to get into the trade. And so he'd encouraged me to apply for some openings that were there at the time. And I remember I was too young because in those days you had to be 21, was kind of a magic age, you know, for so many things. And I was 20. I think my dad had to sign the papers for me to get into the trade. And I wasn't going to spend four years at this. I mean,

hell, it meant school again and that kind of stuff. What am I going to do that for? But it paid a pretty good wage. In fact, it paid, as I remember, two dollars and eighty-nine cents an hour. It was a pretty good wage. You know, starting out as an apprentice.

KN [00:08:27] What year would that have been?

MV [00:08:29] Probably in the early 70s, something along that line. And I mean, I think that Homeco Trailers was paying only a dollar fifty or something or other. So it was a fairly significant wage. And I'm not going to here for four years. But in fact, four years came and went pretty quick. And so I was in the trade for four years till I got my ticket and then stayed on with that for another probably about another oh four or five years after that. So probably in the trade at that period of time, total about eight or nine years, I worked on lots of residential, commercial type jobs in the Okanagan area and then ended up working on some larger kind of...Revelstoke Dam, Line Creek, big coal mine over in the Kootenays, that kind of stuff. So I had a fairly broad experience in that process, but that came to an end pretty suddenly.

KN [00:09:37] Did you get involved in the union in that time?

KN [00:09:37] I've told this story a lot. So I'm not afraid to kind of put it on tape. My dad was a union member. He was Teamsters local 213. He was actually a shop steward, that kind of stuff. And so he'd hear little bits about some union activity and so on. But somewhere along the line before he left, he worked for a place called Chapmans and went on to be Motorways and so on afterwards. But somehow, he soured to the union. I'm not sure what happened. I can tell now with my experience it was some kind of politics that... And so I didn't hear a lot about that. And so I didn't spend a lot of time getting active with the union. I mean, I'd say union if I had to. I'd go to a union meeting once a year, twice probably if it was a bargaining year. But outside of that, that was about how active I was with the union, even with my folks when it came to politics. They definitely taught us to vote and to do that kind of stuff. But not really to engage, just to kind of watch from afar, but make sure that you get out there and vote, do that kind of stuff. So that was my experience with the union through that time.

KN [00:11:02] During that time it seems as though it would have been a period when the federal government brought in wage controls. Do you remember, specifically Oct 14, 1976, the one-day general strike and did you participate?

MV [00:11:16] I mean, actually now I've been involved with the Labour Heritage Centre and looking at history and those kinds of things. I can tell you a lot more specifics about those days. And Joe Morris, who was the President of the Congress, and this and that whatever. But in the time when it actually happened, because as I said, I wasn't totally engaged and totally aware. I was aware that there was wage and price controls. I mean, you had to live under a rock to not know about wage and price controls in those days when the original Trudeau government was in place. And I know that my union was asking us to stay home and show up at some rallies. And I remember not going to work that day because nobody else in the union was going to work that day. But that's about what I knew about it - then. It felt like it was the right thing to do. And so you did it or I did it. But that was it's only later, as I look back that I got a lot more detail on what that was really all about, what was going on. So yeah, but I'm also conscious, though, that, by the way, that was a big movement, I was conscious of that at the time, across the country. that a lot of workers, most workers that were connected to the Canadian Labour Congress, if not all of

them, actually laid their tools down. So I was impressed by that. And I remember that for sure.

KN [00:12:45] So in the early 80s a serious recession struck in British Columbia, and it resulted in high unemployment and very, very significant. In what were you affected or were you affected?

MV [00:13:03] Well, as a construction worker, when unemployment will affect the construction trade first, as a rule, if the economy has gone down of those kinds of things are happening. You know, you feel that in construction, that it's the thing that seems to disappear first. So, yes, my work was disappearing and had disappeared, and unemployment wasn't something; because you work out of a hiring hall and so on, and you work from job to job. Unemployment was something was new to a construction worker, but that length of unemployment sure as hell was new. And so when that hit in the early 80s, that recession. I was unemployed and had been unemployed for four or five months, I guess for sure. And there was no end in sight to that unemployment ending. And I was doing all the things you're supposed to be doing. You know, you had a family and you had a mortgage and you had all of those things you're supposed to have. And, you know, a worker and the economy. And so you had those things to look at. But I was drawing unemployment insurance in those days was called, and I still think it's unemployment insurance. But so I was drawing that. And I was about halfway through that period when my union, a fellow locally by the name of Charlie Peck, who was the business manager, or assistant business manager in the Okanagan area, asked me to get involved with something that was being called this Unemployed Action Centre. And so, again, I was happy to kind of go and do that for my union. Charlie had been talking to me for a while when I was unemployed, and he got me a little bit more engaged with the union. And so I got involved with the Unemployed Action Centre and actually with my union. But in the very early days, it was just a group of volunteers kind of sitting around, you know, commiserating with each other about how the unemployment was affecting us in that region. So that's how I started. But then it mushroomed into things called the Unemployed Action Centres and a whole network and all kinds of stuff. So, yeah.

KN [00:15:18] Can you talk a bit about these Unemployed Action Centres?

MV [00:15:21] Absolutely. The Unemployed Action Centres were a very significant piece of history in this province. And they were based on a model that was happening in Manitoba, kind of Ontario, Quebec. And they were set up as storefront operations in each community under the auspices of the Labour Council and ultimately the Federation of Labour and the United Way and talk about the structures a little later, but that oversaw this. But they were local entities really and the unions in the local areas would bring together, you know, some of the unemployed members to kind of help and support each other. They got some funding. And in the early 80s, about 80 or 81 or 82, I think it was from the federal government to support these Centres. And they'd actually started with three of them in the Lower Mainland; New West, Vancouver and I think Maple Ridge. And so, when the Federation and the United Way got this funding, they thought they might try one or two more of these Centres in the province somewhere within a year. There was actually 32 of them in the province. And that was because with the unemployment rate, the official unemployment rate in those days was somewhere around about 17 percent, but unofficially was probably closer to twenty seven percent because again, there's lots of numbers that when they're doing those stats, they don't take into account, right. And so unemployment was pretty massive, and these Centres caught on really quickly. And again, you were storefront operations working with unemployed people as they come walking in

the front door with whatever kind of problem they had. And, you know, they were being cut off of...their unemployment insurance was running out. There were being cut off welfare in, those days it was called welfare. So you couldn't get welfare, being cut off, welfare, you know, being evicted from their homes, you know, separations, divorces. You know, they were things were being repossessed, their homes, their cars, their whatever the heck. Right? And, you know, I mean, when those things hit, you get all the other things, too; the alcohol abuse, you know, family abuse, you know, families start to fall apart, relationships fall apart. So there was a lot of really sorry stories that were coming walking in that front door at the Unemployed Action Centres... and when they got the funding, they then were able to at least provide the local labour councils with a budget and they were able to hire a Coordinator in each area. The budget was four hundred fifty dollars a month for each Centre. I mean, that was it. Even in those days, that was not a lot of money. So for \$450 a month and the Coordinators got paid \$300 a week, which again, wasn't a lot of money, but I ended up being hired as the Coordinator in Kelowna. Again, that's a whole story by itself. I don't kill the whole tape with that, but I became the Coordinator in Kelowna as one of these 21 and then 32 Unemployed Action Centre Coordinators and became very engaged and they became pretty well structured. We used to go to the Harrison Winter School as Coordinators once a year. We were the Centres lasted for probably about eight years, I think from '80 to about '87 or '88. I was three and a half years as the Coordinator myself. In that time, we set up regional structures and, you know, as I said, the Coordinators kind of got some training and support and education. But you did welfare appeals. You did unemployment insurance appeals. You know, and just all kinds of stuff that lots of times there was, you know, some lay counselling type stuff going on. I mean, only not because any skills or ability, you just you were a Centre somewhere and you were here. A lot of times people just come and talk to. So there was a lot of that. And we ended up setting up food banks. And there's a whole story around food banks. And I think it's something that we should understand that food banks in this province for the main were supported and started by the labour movement. But we didn't do it for some of the reasons that we see food banks today. We did it because we wanted to use them as a way to kind of politically embarrass the provincial governments, provincial government and say, look at this is so bad out here that people are actually having to get food, you know, the basics. Get food and so on. And also, we wanted to use them as a way to kind of organize the unemployed, but we discovered a third kind of issue when we were setting up the food banks. That was people needed food, you know. And so as the labour movement, we were setting these food banks up in that context. And there was huge debates raging on the left and in the labour movement about whether we should have food banks or shouldn't have food banks and all that stuff. And so I know we did the one in Kelowna. We set it up in such a way that people got referrals to the local food bank. They didn't go in line up in front like you see most them now, you go in line up in front and wait for a bag of food. They would come, and in fact, the one in Kelowna, it was the Salvation Army that came to the local Labour Council, asked them to set the food bank up because they didn't have the capacity or the ability to set up a food bank. And they thought that the labour movement would have the capacity and the organizing abilities to do it. So the only two places you could get a referral to the food bank was from the Salvation Army and the Unemployed Action Centre. And so every Monday and Wednesday, people would come in looking for food. And whoever came in looking for food always got food. That wasn't a problem. But what we were wanting to do was to kind of talk to them and try to empower them somewhat and say, well, why do you need food? And all the stories will be there. About, you know, I've lost my job, you know, welfare's cut me off, EI's run out. Whatever the heck it is, you know? And so we tried to encourage them to, you know, get a welfare appeal kit and to appeal. And so if you have 15 or 20 them coming through that were cut off welfare in a day, you might convince two of them, go get an appeal kit. And one of them would come back with the kit.

And so you'd start to appeal these processes. So we started to take on those provincial systems and federal systems through that organized structure, as well as it was a place for the workers to come and be empowered. So lots of stories Ken, to tell you about the Unemployed Action Centres and the organizing that went on there. It was just a natural thing that happened with the unemployed people and used it in all kinds of ways for sure.

KN [00:22:56] Well we have you on tape, the Labour Heritage Centre has a tape on Solidarity (unclear). And I would just like for the purpose of this tape for you to recount specifically, the role that the Unemployed Action Centres played in, particularly, outside of the metro area in terms of the organization of Solidarity Coalition and Operation Solidarity.

MV [00:23:19] Well because we were storefront operations for the labour councils, labour councils and to this day, it's only Vancouver and New West and Victoria I think would actually have staff as labour councils. So all of these labour councils in those days, 25 Labour Councils, I believe in the province and a number of them then had this kind of office and a staff person. So you became a natural flow for communication, for the Solidarity side, for sure. You know, so the Solidarity information that would come out from the Federation and, you know, that group, because you were a contact, you keep the Labour Council involved there and informed and so on. On the Coalition side, because you were up to your eyeballs with community activity and what was happening because of the stuff I just described, you became the place that really an awful lot of the Coordinators in the province became the chairs of the Coalition side in their communities. So if there was a Coalition meeting or Coalition information that needed to get out from the larger group in the Lower Mainland or whatever, that network was used to get that information out. We distributed the buttons and we distributed the pamphlets and we distributed the newsletters and we did all of that stuff from both sides. So it was a pretty big key player in the Solidarity stuff for sure.

KN [00:24:55] Merv, tell us a bit about how you did all of this, your experience with Unemployment Action Centres... how did you end up with the United Way?

MV [00:25:03] Well, the United Way job and with the Unemployed Action Centre is, as I said, I was, you know, not kind of politically engaged and not totally politically aware and not engaged to my union. I did get involved through that time on the executive of IBEW 213 and went on to be the Treasurer. And so that side was happening and learning a little bit more about the labour movement and through my own union, and formerly with the Unemployed Action Centre, you were just so busy with this stuff that was going on. And for me it was...and we had it in Kelowna, and I became the regional Coordinator and so on too, we had a newsletter and we had a formal relationship with the local Catholic Church. And I said with the Salvation Army as well. We ended up, they called it the pink triangle in those days. That started really through our Centre in Kelowna. And that went on to be the Rainbow Coalition and some of that. There was just a ton of those things at the food bank I described. And so on. So I was beginning to understand, whether I wanted to or not, how politics was playing a role in people's lives. And also, while I was there being unemployed, I wondered if I could be an electrician anymore or not. And I wondered if I was any good at it, you know, because you're off the tools for a while. I hadn't had a call, actually, because of all this unemployment that was going on. But, well, three and a half years into this process, calls started to come. And I did get a call to go back on the tools at Line Creek out of Squamish, which was a pulp mill there, and they were expanding it. And so I took it somewhat reluctantly because I was really engaged in this political stuff and really thinking this was the kind of work I needed to do and so on. But I also need to get paid, because at \$300 a week it was pretty tough going with a family. And I needed to see whether or not I

was any good on the tools again. So I took this call, went to work in Squamish and as I was working there and found out yeah, I'm still a good electrician, I can do this stuff and whatever. But I felt like I was outside the loop and I decided that, you know what, I really wanted to work in the labour movement, I want to engage in that. I want to be involved and I want to make my life's direction through that part. So I worked for the eight months there. And Joy Langan, who was the first woman officer of the BC Federation of Labour, she was in a position at the time, although I wasn't aware that we were, because Joy Langan was the Coordinator for these Unemployed Action Centres. She was the staff person under the Federation that kind of all these 32 Centres would report to on a daily basis. And so there was a department there that she oversaw. And so I was aware of her and this little department she had, all the time I thought it was out of the Federation of Labour, BC Federation of Labour. A position came open there. And so I was asked to apply for this position, and did, and got it, like with many other my job stories there, but I won't burn the tape up for that one. But got this job and when I got the job, I didn't really know it was with the United Way, because I knew Joy in her whole other life. And that was a full life where she was Chair of the Party provincially and federally and engaged, and she was the first woman, as I said, officer of the Federation and, you know, very involved in all kinds of stuff,

MV [00:29:14] the Unemployed Action Centre. So I'd never seen that part of what was happening. But in fact, the Centre had run out of the United Way, of the Lower Mainland. And so I got hired into this job. And when I got the job, the woman, Jackie Weiler, who was there in the department, sent me this collective agreement for the workplace. And I started to read the collective agreement it was saying United Way, United Way, United Way. And so I got a hold of Jackie and said, "what's this United Way stuff?" "Well it's your work". Oh, I do? Because I remember the only experience I had with United Way previous to that was in the North Okanagan Labour Council once a year the United Way would, you know, send a letter, asking us to engage. And I would vote with the rest then to nuke that idea, you know, because it was too corporate and so on and so on. Well, at least this will bring me to the coast and is paying pretty good and I could engage in the labour community. And so, you know, I can probably get a real job in six months with the labour movement. And so I went to work there at the United Way in the Labour Department, and I worked there for six months on a daily basis. And lots of things, you start to learn stuff, right. And I began to realize at the end of six months that there was a reason for labour to be involved in United Way. And I thought if it took me six months working full time to figure it out, how are the members going to know unless you go out and kind of tell them. So that was the beginning. And I learned a lot of stuff about what the partnership is. And I can talk about that in a few minutes. But what the partnership is and why it was and so on, and Joy went on to, Joy Langan went on to run for Member of Parliament out of the Maple Ridge area and under the Broadbent government (NDP Leadership), she got herself elected. And so that left the director position open in the department. And they asked me to fill it. And I did. And spent 30 years then in that job.

KN [00:31:09] So could you talk a bit about what that job involved? Like what kind of things you did in that position?

MV [00:31:13] I think I can talk a lot about what that job involved because it was very encompassing. Interesting. I mentioned Joe Morris a little earlier and talked about the wage and price controls. There is a formal relationship with United Way and the labour movement, the Canadian Labour Congress. And they tell people and told people lots that we only really have two formal relationships in the labour movement. In that there's some kind of documentation and, you know, structure that comes out of it and so on. And one is

with the party, with the NDP. I mean, the Canadian Labour Congress worked with the CCF, we created that party and there's some kind of guiding principles and all that kind of stuff. So it's a structure that we need to pay attention to, and we need to engage in, because we created that. The United Way is the other one. Yeah. There's some formal documentation, some staffing that come out of it, Coordinator and so on. Now that doesn't mean we don't work with just a ton of other things, we do, and we need to. But those are the two formal relationships that we have. You know, the United Way is one of the formal ones. And so out of that, when Joe Morris was the President of the Canadian Labour Congress, he began to work a lot closer with the United Way at the national level around fundraising, because the backbone for the United Way was workplace fundraising. That's where they raised their funds, was in the workplace. And that's so that was to say, one of our early volunteers said that the United Way's contributions come from workers contributing nickels and dimes and quarters to make that big number in each community they're in each year. So it was the workplace that drove that. And so from the United Way perspective, it made sense if we're gonna be engaged in the United Way in the workplace to, yes, we engage with employers, but also be engaged with the other entity. That's the labour movement that exists there. And I used to say the United Way all the time, in those days too. They're very much like the labour movement. Real good at organizing large workplaces. Not so good at organizing the smaller ones. So most of the workplaces that the United Way was in 90 plus percent almost were large workplaces, federal government, provincial government. So, you know, big industrial places, all that kind of stuff. And they were all unionized. And so actually lots of work around fundraising and learned just a whole bunch of stuff around fundraising, how to fundraise and what to fundraise for and why to fundraise, why not to fundraise and those kinds of stuff. Then the whole side that was, you know, hadn't thought a lot about with that was that whole allocation side, that whole spending of that money. Now you got it. How do you spend it? And so there was lots of work went on around. How is that money used? And, you know, how should it be used? And the labour movement had a huge influence on how the United Way kind of spent their money. And a lot of progressive programs that came out of the United Way or came because of the United Way happened in this country. And for that matter, there's programs in the states too, but happened because the labour movement was influencing that thinking. You know, the United Way in the lower mainland in this province, many, many of them, but I can think about the living wage campaign. I can think about the poverty reduction. We have a Ministry today, poverty reduction, and the United Way 15 plus years ago funded the CCPA to do some research around poverty reduction that created the coalition. The coalition did all its work, and it went on to become a Ministry. I mean, so there was lots and lots of progressive things that happened with United Way. There's also lots of things that rubbed the labour movement, lots of recognition for corporations. And, you know, the workers didn't really get them and all that stuff. So all that stuff on either side, the fundraising and the allocation. But interesting, the big piece that we used to do was something called union counselling. And that's where now that supposedly we've raised this money now let's supposedly, we've done all of this good work in the community and these services are all supposedly out there and all that kind of stuff, how do workers find them when they need them? You know, and so the union counsellors were trained peer referral agents from the workplace, from the union movement. And their job was to make referrals to the community. So you would come to them and, you know, all of us as activists, whether we see that in our early days or not. If you as soon as you kind of step forward and become the shop steward or whatever it is, let alone being the grievance handler or the executive member's and so on, you're in a leadership role. And when you're in that leadership role, people can have an opinion about you whether you're doing a good job or a bad job. Absolutely. And that's most of what we deal with a lot. But people go Oh! that person must know something. And so and I trust that person, they're me, they're

another worker, that kind of stuff. So I should talk to them about, you know, what's going on with me, you know?

MV [00:36:35] And we also learned through grievances and so on, as we do the grievances that this so-called personal issues impact. You know, the whole thing when you go to take the grievance and the boss says the H.R. person says, oh, come on Merv, we know what's going on at their place? Right. You know, I mean, they're in trouble with their drinking. They're in trouble with their family. They're in trouble with whatever. And so those issues tend to come into the grievances. And so, again, as active shop stewards, we we get engaged in lots of those issues. We end up talking to our members about their lives, about what we think needs to, they need to do in their lives, how they need to clean some of that stuff up and so on. So the union counsellors were trained referral agents that were being set up in a way that you would have an ideal kind of a union. We know and lots of times in the union that one member holds the health and safety hat and the shop steward hat and whatever, right. But ideally, there should be somebody doing health and safety. There should be somebody doing grievances. Shouldn't somebody do what we call union counselling? Because when you go into the grievance and then the employer says, we know what's going on there. That tends to be the conversation as opposed to. No, no, no, no, no. You actually didn't follow the collective agreement, you know, and we're here to talk about the collective agreement. We're not here to talk about Ken personally or somebody else personally. Yes, I have some concerns about those things, but that's not what we're talking about. And then as a union, we want to make sure that that person is looked after as well. So the union counsellor is set up to be able to make those referrals. And they're not there to be counsellors. They're not there to be therapists. They're there to know the community and to be able to refer people out. So there was a lot of work that went around that. But if you had a good union counselling program as well and that thought process, you'd also start to think about...and that's what the training was about a lot, too, was...interesting that I had this one scenario where one person came in and they had a drug problem or they had a family problem or they had whatever the heck it was. And we need to deal with them, and we need to deal with this grievance and get on. But if we start to have more than one, we start to have a pattern develop in the workplace. It's time for us to do what we do normally is ask the 'why' question. Why is this happening in our workplace? And we begin to discover that there's a pattern there and there's a reason for these patterns to exist. And it's around...and I've learned this over and over and over again through that union counselling training...it's the way work is structured. It is not the worker bringing their problem to the workplace. It is the workplace taking their problem to the worker. And so we ended up in, and many times in these employee assistance and all of those kind of models where we were at odds with them because they took the approach that the worker was well...and I learned language is pretty powerful. Employee assistance program. Actually, if you think about that language, it means that the employee needs assistance. It doesn't say the workplace is fucked-up program, you know.

MV [00:39:47] And so we have many kind of issues that we moved and pushed from things that we knew in the labour movement. But you could have this body of union counsellors thinking more collectively about it. You could move to some kinds of solutions. And so we'd actually, we were involved in all kinds of things like the drug testing and that kind of stuff that was going on in workplaces and you name it. There isn't an issue. I did that work for so long Ken, that I can tell you today what kind of dysfunction you're going to have based on the workplace you're in, because it doesn't work the other way around. You start to see the patterns that exist in the rails, and exist in the nurses. You know, and it's all the workplace construction, so on, because it's the way work is structured that causes those types of problems. So that was a big program. That was a big part of what we were

doing in there, doing that training, putting those networks together, developing that political kind of thinking around it. And that was part of a national program. They call us Labour staff; the Canadian Labour Congress and the United Way had these full-time staff across the country. And so we'd get together once a year as well as a national to talk about those kinds of things. So I can, as you can tell, go on a lot more about that. But I think you get the gist of that work was all encompassing. And so it led to all kinds of...and you were very engaged because of that with the labour movement overall with all of those issues. David Rice, who was the regional director of the Canadian Labour Congress, for a long period of time, worked very closely with him here. And because of all of the issues that were happening in the labour movement and the things that were going on with women really pushing to be more engaged and to have more women involved and so on and so on. And absolutely, one of the issues then and continues today is the way women are perceived, you know, as not having, you know, not being equal and being sexual objects and so on, so on. One of the ways we worked to kind of combat that was to create an ombudsman role so that if these problems did occur and they did, at the Harrison Winter School or the Federation of Labour, they had a place to go to, to talk to somebody. Hey, this just happened to me. Can it be dealt with? So and so on. So David worked with me and we set up the ombudsman role at the Federation of Labour and Harrison Winter School. I did that myself personally as the male ombudsperson for about 25 years at the Federation, about 30 at the Winter School. So there was just all kinds of things that grew out of that union counselling stuff.

KN [00:42:38] You referred to the Harrison Labour School, and it would be very interesting to have you tell us something about that school, its origin and also your role within it.
<unclear>

MV [00:42:56] Well, I would really want us to focus pretty hard on this Winter School that the Canadian Labour Congress has now at Harrison. It was started by Art Kube and those of us our age now know Art Kube, lots of people behind us don't. But he was the guy that started it, very involved in Operation Solidarity, was the kingpin, was the President of the Federation of Labour many, many things. And so we know and hear a lot of that stuff about Art Kube, but don't necessarily focus on the Winter School. And I think the Winter School is so critical because it's a mainstay and Art and a number of others; Frank Wall and you know, a number of other people at the time got this idea going. And I think in Art's interview, he talks a bit about it and he talks from, you know, from at least from my perspective, what a political force that was. And he set it up as a political force for the reasons at the time, right? And the Winter School has been around then for close to 40 years I bet now.

KN [00:44:12] Tell us a bit about what the Winter School is.

MV [00:44:14] What it is, it's bringing workers together. And, yes, you do some professional development stuff. You teach them about accessing, how to read the WCB regs and those kind of, handle agreements and how to do that. But what you're really doing is you're bringing them together. So they start to identify as workers in the province; that they're not alone. So some of the issues I just talked about earlier and many others that I didn't talk about. One of the things that happens at the winter school is you can wander in as the garbage collector, as the nurse or as the teacher, as the electrician or as whatever terms of your trade. And you discover that the same issues are going on and all those other workplaces, is going on in my workplace that it's not just my workplace, that you start to realize this is a bigger strategy that's happening and it's just manifesting itself in your workplace this way. So bringing these workers together, bring these activists

together and getting them to understand that, talking about politics, talking about organizing and talking about... So you politicize the concepts, the ideas that you're talking about, about not only do we have to file a WCB appeal, but we have to also fight to make sure WCB represents us and where it came from, just as an example. So it's an activist training ground and lots of things that happen at that school or focus exactly on that. They do a choir competition. Just as an example, anybody who's been there, or anybody's heard about the Winter School likely has heard about this choir competition. And from my perspective, what the choir competition is, it's kind of like the dispute in the workplace. So when those students come in on Sunday night, they hear from the Chancellor. They have this big meeting on Sunday night saying, oh, and by the way, you're gonna sing. And everybody says, we're gonna sing? I don't know if I want to sing, I've never sang. And I'm sure as heck not going to sing in a group and I'm not gonna sing in front of somebody and so on. So it's kind of like, you know, as an activist that they're an activist, as a union member, there's always this potential to go on strike. And so you have an opinion about, well, I don't know if I'd go on strike or could go on strike or would go on strike. And so Monday morning rolls around. You get into the classroom, you start with this Winter School choir thing, you hear about it and you're told that you need to organize this as a class. You have to come up with a song. You have to be prepared to sing it. And everybody has to participate. All that kind of stuff, which equates itself again to things aren't going real well at the bargaining table here, guys. We need to think about building some solidarity and bringing ourselves together and being able to show the employer and so on, we're prepared to do this kind of work. And so you practice, you know, for the Wednesday night and, you know, people are okay with that. They're not okay with that. They participate. They don't participate. They know whatever, but they start to come together a little bit. So you have the meetings about the dispute. And people start to get information about that dispute is the way that I see it. And then Wednesday night comes and you're up on that stage and you are up on that stage and you're in front of all these other people and you're doing something that, you know, this group up here, you've got to know them a little tiny bit, but you don't know if we can pull this off or can pull it off or can't pull it off. And, you know, you're being judged while you're up there. You know that people are looking at you and saying you're doing a good job or you're doing a bad job. All that stuff eh, and you do it and you do it and you produce this, and you leave that stage. And so that's the picket line, right? You get the picket line, you get it there and you start to. The only thing keeping you on the stage is being able to feel the other person's shoulder next to yours. So you you know, you do that, right? So that's the picket line piece. Then the strike is over. Right? So the next morning in the classroom, what happens every Thursday morning in the classrooms? We were the best. We really showed them that kind of stuff. Right. There's that sense of solidarity that comes together around the whole song.

MV [00:48:22] And so the song at the Winter School, long story... Is just an example of the kinds of activities that would happen at that school to teach workers that we need to come together, that we do these things for a reason and we have the ability to do those kind of things. There's many, many examples that happened, but that's just an example of one. So, winter school I think, was a huge part of how active the labour movement has and can be in this province because of that Winter School strong... Nine hundred to twelve hundred members a year go through that place. If it's strong, if the message is strong, the movement is strong. Yes. There's lots of other things going on as well. I get that. But that school has been huge to this province.

KN [00:49:13] So another thing that you were basically involved in, right from the beginning was the creation of the Labour Heritage Centre.

MV [00:49:26] Yes, yes. Yes.

KN [00:49:28] It would be good for you to tell us a bit about the early days and how it got started. <unclear>

MV [00:49:36] Well, based on everything I just said now as the director of the CLC Labour Participation Department, United Way of the Lower Mainland... you know, engaging in all kinds of issues and community issues and so on. As we were developing this whole union counselling program, the stuff that we're describing. Because the workplace being messed up is the problem and that we need to negotiate conditions that make the workplace healthier. Just a sidebar for a second. I used in the classes all the time that in this province you couldn't legally have a coffee break. It wasn't in the employment standards forever. In fact, I'm hoping it is now. I haven't looked lately, but I don't know. It just wasn't right, and we would have it in the collective agreement, I'd say. Did you know that you couldn't legally have a coffee break? Now, workers and everybody have a coffee break this province. But it's because it's in our collective agreements. And when with it being in our collective agreements, you also need to understand that everything that's in the collective agreement is what the workers at one point decide, this is what we're gonna go to the wall on. So at some point there was huge campaigns around coffee breaks, and they finally came through. And from my perspective, what we're doing with the employers through the collective agreements and that kind of stuff, is constantly trying to teach them what they need to know to get what it is they want, increased productivity, profitability. As I said, the Homeco Trailer stuff way back. Great, that stuck with me. And so we say, look stupid, if you want to increase productivity you've got to give us a break, you know? So knowing those things and, you know, the collective agreement and bargaining, that kind of stuff and was getting a handle on some conditions, that needed to be negotiated in the workplace to help with this union counselling stuff. Family leave kind of things and, you know, different stuff. And also as developing some kind of language that can be used. We came up with this brainchild that we would work with kind of the leadership of the labour movement here in BC and get them to understand these things and get them to bargain. And we were doing bits of that, but we thought we'd do it in a big way. We kept the brainchild of bringing together union activists that were retired, leadership that were retired, because we get them to understand this. Then they would understand the politics of the labour movement and they could move this agenda fairly quickly. Right.

MV [00:52:03] So we called a meeting. We called a meeting of people like Art Kube and Jack Munro and Dollie Robertson Riser and Patrice Pratt and I don't know, just a lot of I think it was probably about 30 that we called to this meeting that we thought were...

KN [00:52:21] When you say "we"...

MV [00:52:21] Well, the department in the United Way, the Labour Department to really through there was a structure there and some activists that I worked with and so on. So we'd bring them together. And I mean, there was retirement structures like BC Forum and different things that we were going to be doing a little different work. So we were going to create a different structure. And so we put out the call to all these people thinking, well we'll get a few of them and we got pretty much all of them. 30 or 35 people showed up at this first meeting. All these retired activists, people that I, you know, kind of in awe of, people that I've worked with and watched their leadership roles. And, you know, some I had some great opinions about, some I had some other opinions about, but I respected all of them as leaders and what they had done. And they all respected themselves. So we laid this out to them, over a period of a couple of meetings. And they were going... OK, OK,

yeah, I can kind of get this. And then they started to talk to each other about their experiences while they were in the leadership role and in the labour movement. And they quickly started to talk about that in terms of history. And I know in terms of doing a lot of this work, lots of times when you're, you know, up to your ass in alligators, you forget you're trying to drain the swamp. And so to relate that back here a little bit while you're trying to do this big stuff with these people. You actually have to give them something to do in the meantime. Right. And so the history stuff became huge, and it became a lot of what they talked about, as this larger committee. And one of the people, Norm Garcia, he actually had a bit of a draft plan. And we used to call it the Purple Book. And he had a bit of a draft plan in this purple book that he brought to one of the meetings about how to set up what we're now calling the Labour Heritage Centre. And it was gonna be a museum kind of a set up. And it was going to teach history and it was going to have a political kind of a component where it would have some political dialogue taking place in the Centre. And it would be a focal point then. And so that took root pretty good in that what while we were trying to do the other stuff. And then Jack Munro kind of took the bit in his teeth.

MV [00:54:46] He was, as I've learned with retired people, one of the things that happens is that you feel like you've been put out to pasture. You're not connected any longer and so on. And so if you have an opportunity to engage with something, you're likely to do that. And this fit with what Jack was prepared to do. And so he started to coalesce a lot of the members that were in the room into another group looking at what we call the Labour Heritage Centre today. Originally, and it did start out (unclear) we did go to. And I think most of the founding unions still exist today with the Centre in terms of funding. We went out and asked for funding. We did, for lack of a better term, kind of a feasibility study with, you know, the leadership, the union movement, some community people, philanthropists, different... to see if there was an appetite outside of this little group. And there was everywhere we went, people were quite excited about it. So Brenda Wagg was one of the first staff we hired, she actually, we actually cleared an office in the United Way and they worked out of there to begin with. And I think for about five or six months. And then we moved over to another office just down the street.

KN [00:56:05] Roughly what year would you ...?

MV [00:56:09] That's likely 20 years ago now when it probably started to come together. Twenty, something like that. So that's where we are at now, 2000. Yeah, in that neighbourhood. And so this committee had met maybe for the year before. Kind of, and what we did in the department, again that's the work that we did. We provided them a room to have a meeting, we provided them a coffee pot and we provided them the ability to get minutes sent out. And that was the structure that was necessary to kind of feed that energy. And so then we would go to this other Centre or other office from Concert Properties. We got a student grant federally. We began to work with some architects. We began to work with the City of Burnaby for some property. And we're really headed down this road strong and hard and committed and all works to actually build this building in Burnaby and make this happen with this building.

KN [00:57:06] What's with this building, what kind of building?

MV [00:57:06] Well, it was going to be a two-storey, three-storey building in the Burnaby and the kind of Willingdon freeway area, you know, and not far from the City Hall in fact, across the street, and the City had committed to giving us this property, if we were prepared to, you know, find the funding for it and that kind of stuff. And so every place we went, you know, it was moving, and the energy was really growing. And so all our

meetings were about how you do that. And we got a student loan, student loan, a student grant. And that's some students together develop a business plan around doing that. And had an architect we were working with actually drew plans of what it would look like and there would be a garden then, you know, a place where people could wander through and see history and there would be an open museum, kind of an area and an auditorium and, you know, some offices, but more just to run the Centre itself and do whatever outreach we could from there. So that was the idea of the building. And that went on for about three, maybe four years of that process. And then we had a board, we set up a Society, we did all that stuff. And then another conversation and some reality kind of set in. The conversation was that we need to be the B.C. Labour Heritage Centre. We need to be in the province. And while the well the building in Burnaby would be great, would be wonderful, it was more a lower mainland focused. And some of us had grown up beyond Hope. And there was enough people around that knew that we need to do more than that to get the province engaged. And the reality was that in the time that we were having this conversation, the cost of building that building went up a lot. And so the cost was getting a little out of control. Not that I was ever concerned about, anybody who knows me about fundraising or money. That's never a big problem for me. The idea is correct. I believe the money will come, but. So I wasn't concerned about that. And you know in the bigger picture, not necessarily we're focused on. But then this opportunity hit as well with the Convention Centre. And to put the plaques around the Convention Centre and do some of that. And we knew that because Gordon Campbell was the Premier of the province at the time, that the politics of working with Gordon Campbell and the Labour Heritage Centre put you right into kind of a political sphere. We worked hard to stay out of politics, to do the best we could. But it did, it did taint you. And so we were conscious of that. And by doing that, putting those plaques on the Convention Centre and so on, we began to realize that, you know what we do need to change this to a provincial concept. We do need to kind of broaden the board. And we were doing that anyway. Ken, I think you engaged during that time. But we broadened the board, began to think about how we put other kinds of plaques, those kinds of ideas, in the province. And so I was engaged with that right up until just after Jack's death. And him and I had worked on that when I say him and I, there was lots of people we had worked together pretty closely for about 13 years. And so that was the basis. And then you took over Ken, Ken Novakowski. That's who's interviewing me here. But to be the Chair then really put the meat on the bones of the rest of it. You know that whole idea of we need to be visible, that we can do lots of research, we can do lots of programming, we can do the Solidarity thirty-five years later, we can do all kinds of stuff, Plaques Around the Province. And you've got any number of things you're doing then be very visible. So it grew from that little kind of seed, pulling those activists together to, you know, where I think now it's a very viable, solid Centre. And I think it's important that the labour movement...it's interesting some of the people engaged here, some of the unions engaged, now, when we approached in the beginning, didn't necessarily think it was a solid enough to get behind at the time. They weren't opposed, but they weren't, you know, kind of pushing. But now they're very engaged. And so it tells me that the Centre has grown to where the labour movement in B.C. is recognizing it and engaging with it. So, yeah.

KN [01:02:03] Just one, if you don't mind, filling in a bit about the Convention Centre plaques how that all happened, then what role Jack <unclear>

MV [01:02:25] One of the people that we went to see in the feasibility study was a fellow named David Podmore. David Podmore was CEO, I think was the title, of Concert Properties, which was set up by the Working Enterprises Fund, which was, you know, put together by Georgetti in the Federation at the time. And they the Concert Properties, is you

know, a construction kind of company. And David Podmore was not only did a great job with the Concert Properties and turned that into an amazing organization, but he also had a lot of credibility in the community overall and the Convention Centre when it was being built. If you want to dig into the politics of it. Gordon Campbell doing it and he was doing it for the reasons he was doing, the Premier the province at the time, kind of a bugger, we didn't like him otherwise, that's for sure. He was gutting the labour movement, but he got in trouble financially with that Convention Centre, and the only person that seemed to be able to bail that out...and because it was getting to where it was over half built, it wasn't the kind of thing you could shut it down...was David Podmore. So Podmore took over kind of being the general contractor or managing that Convention Centre. And because Jack and David knew each other quite well, there wasn't many people Jack didn't know, actually. But Podmore said to Jack at one point, look, this Convention Centre needs a theme. And so it didn't take Jack long to say, "well, it should be a theme about workers in this province". And it sure didn't take Podmore long to go, "I agree". And so that's where the idea kind of came from in the beginning. And then there was the work about, OK, was it's going to look like and what does that mean? And so on. And we came up with the idea of the plaques and different, different things for the theme of the Centre. And Jack was very, absolutely, very engaged and the board was very engaged in that whole process. The board members, I think, were all pushing pretty hard and, you know, lifting some pretty big pieces to make that happen. They looked like plaques and great plaques now, but the amount of lifting and heaving that went into make those happen, including needing to meet with Gordon Campbell, you know. I guess I can tell a story on tape here can I? Jack was a great guy to work with. He knew everybody and from somewhere and somehow and whatever, right. And he knew this Gordon Campbell from another life when he was Mayor of Vancouver. And so Campbell was naturally prepared to meet with Jack because he knew him.

MV [01:05:18] And so Jack, part of what you had to do was kind of see what the Premier's concept was and move our concept too. And so that was what this meeting was about. And so I attended this meeting with Jack, Jack and I and Gordon Campbell in the offices downtown, in the Premier's office downtown talking about this whole idea. And Jack was pushing him pretty hard, saying this is what we need, and we need you to put the money in. And if we're gonna do this, you know, we need this theme, and it needs to be us that sets the theme, and not you, and all that kind of stuff. And I remember this little story, Gordon Campbell saying to Jack at one point, "well, Jack, if we're gonna do this for you, then I get a parade right?" Jack is sitting next to me, Jack says, "yeah, you'll get a parade Gord". I looked at Jack and said "what the hell are you talking about? We're doing a parade for this Convention Centre?" And Jack says, "it might be only Merv and I in it, but you're gonna get a parade". (laughter)

MV [01:06:19] So that's the kind of stuff that moved this forward. And Jack and yourself and all the board people, we understood the politics we were playing with. And I see now, and we did, we believed that time there was a bigger picture and there was something bigger to move. But no, there was anything that the Centre is doing now, as we're well aware, there's lots of work behind it. It might end up being a video because a lot of the video started then, too, and has been carried on since it might be end up being a video or a plaque somewhere. And it looks like a plaque or a video. But the amount of work that goes into making that happen, the amount of work that the board goes into, the decision making about keeping this Centre active and heading in the right direction. The fact you have staff now, good staff, great staff, you know, working away on a weekly basis. You know, that's it makes an old guy like me, feel pretty bloody good about that original idea and the people that I got to work with, just amazing people.

KN [01:07:21] So one more thing. One more thing on the origins on the BC Labour Heritage Centre and it relates to the Workers Compensation Board. Because around the theme of labour. They did the 'Line of Work' at the Convention Centre. And also, you mentioned videos, they partnered with the Centre to begin those series of Health & Safety videos. Can you talk about how that all that came about, because that's not something...?

MV [01:07:52] It's the same kind of thinking that I just kind of described with the plaques. And that's where the board was at with its thinking. And that's where Jack was at with the board. And the people we brought in were that way. What is the, what is the big idea and what can the big idea be? And how do we get there without politicizing the Centre, without, you know, making sure always that it's the labour focus and labour is on side and unions and, you know, that kind of stuff. And so we began to talk with allies. I just described the one with the Concert Properties. And we always, you know, believed strongly, all of us, that the WCB is a worker compensation, not employer compensation. And that it needs to continue, and it needs to reflect and it needs to be pushed to make sure it does exactly that. Jack happened to know the CEO; Jack used to be into miniature train models. And he had a set-up at his home, in his garage, of miniature trains.

MV [01:09:09] And it was quite a little set-up in these trains would run around and he'd built it. And it turned out that the CEO at the time and I have to tell you, I forget his name. I could see him, but I forget his name. He also was a miniature train collector. And so again, with Jack's reputation, plus when I say that Jack was who he was, but there was this whole board behind him, there was lots of planning, there was lots of thought. There was lots of you know, he had the strategy when he walked into the room, he had to pull it off, but he didn't invent it necessarily by himself. But so we went in to meet with the CEO of WCB. And they - and I hope they're coming back a little bit now under this government - but they weren't necessarily seen as terribly worker-friendly pulling that whole thing about, you know anyway... But they... so Jack brought a little model train and, you know, talked to the CEO. And, you know, they broke the ice pretty quick, pretty quick around that. And so he started to talk about what can we do about talking about history of health and safety and the IWA in fact, was branded with and was known as, not that the other unions didn't, but they had done a lot of organizing around safety. And so he had that kind of aura about him and his union, had that kind of aura about it. So the WCB was more than prepared to work with, you know, the IWA around that stuff. And they were the ones that said that they have this facility, that they create all of these videos. And the fellow that was put in charge, I forget his name, but a good guy. And he was put in charge of doing this. And him and Jack... Yes, Scott McCloy. That's right. And once he got engaged and we knew what we were looking for at that point. This facility from WCB to do these kind of videos and so on. It just took off from there. So we would work through. And you're still doing that today. You know, work through an idea and then work the idea with them. And then they would, you know. So that's where it came from, that alliance. And that is exactly that.

KN [01:11:33] Well, thank you for that. A couple of more questions, but before I ask them, I just wondered if you wanted to say anything else about your work in the labour movement or your work with United Way.

KN [01:11:51] Well, I guess what I would say is I've been fortunate, you know, through stumbling through from one thing to another almost, you know, and that I have been able to put my time in so far with what I...in those days, we kind of called it the social conscience of the labour movement. I don't think we use that term much anymore. But I didn't even know when I was growing up in that farm. And first, getting involved with the

IBEW was such a thing as a social conscience of the labour movement. And I've managed to spend my life there and I think managed to learn that was about redesigning the workplace and that communities exist because there's workplaces. That's why they exist. It didn't exist the other way around. And you just have to look at single industry towns to see the impact that a workplace has on a community. In a larger place like the Lower Mainland and some others, plants will shut down and so on. You're aware of it. You're conscious of it as an activist, you're concerned about it. You're doing whatever you can, but you don't really feel the effects. The people engaged do. But if you go to a smaller community, you know where there's a mill or a mine or for that matter, the Harrison Hotel in Harrison, where that community exists and they work around that, if that plant in that industry is working well, you know, things are going pretty good in that community. You know, people are, you know, going on picnics and they're buying things and they're engaging with their families. That doesn't mean there's still some dysfunctions happening. There's still some other problems going on in that community, no question. But for the main, it's got a good aura, it's got a good glow. But when that plant either threatens to shut down or does shut down, all of a sudden, you've got all kinds of problems in that community. And, you know, you've got marriage break ups and you've got divorces and you've got all the stuff I described earlier with the Unemployed Action Centres. And so we have to, and I've learned, that we have to push that question more about has the worker impact on the workplace or has the workplace impact on the worker. And we've got to stay focused on that. And we've got to talk more about that. And I've been very proud to learn what I have learned from that and to engage with things like the Labour Heritage Centre and so on because of it, because I believe that's part of what the Labour Heritage Centre's doing for sure, is talking about how important history is. Yes, from a perspective of you need to know, this is pretty cool, it's interesting and it's good and great for us, and so on. But more about, you know, what we've struggled, and we need to continue to struggle. And I hope that people get, for example, my words...that they've moved the company store to our Visa card. You know, we're still fighting the same fights, that fought in my generation, in a generation before... Different tools, different kind of times, different eras, you know. But it's still the company store attitude is still that kind of stuff that we're pushing back against. So I've been proud and excited to work with people like yourself Ken and on that part of the labour movement. And we need to keep that alive, because when the movement is busy doing what we have to do, we're fighting those bloody bosses all the time because they're coming at you constantly, you know. It's hard to say, you know, that, gee, and we need to be proactive at the same time. You know, we need to be strategic about that work. So that's I guess what I'd say, you know, we need to keep that in focus. You know, pick your head up every now and again, and let's hope places like the Labour Heritage Centre and, you know, the partnership with United Way and the Canadian Labour Congress and the Federation of Labour and all those umbrella organizations are painting the horizon out there somewhere so we can see it. You know, that's important work.

KN [01:15:54] So thank you very much. The last part was very good point., thank you.

MV [01:16:02] You bet. OK, good.